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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000089

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/DSS/IP, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/DSS/ATA,
DS/ATA/TR, AF/E, AF/EX
ADDIS ABABA FOR RSO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2014

TAGS: PTER ASEC DJ

SUBJECT: TRAIN EXPLOSION IN DJIBOUTI

REF: 03 DJIBOUTI 2241

Classified By: RSO MARC RAMOS FOR REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) On the morning of January 18, 2004 an explosive device detonated aboard a car of the Ethiopian/Djibouti Railway. Current reports reveal that several people experienced moderate injuries and one female experienced serious injuries that would possibly result in the amputation of one of her legs. The severity of her injuries was due to proximity to the device. Djiboutian authorities responded to the scene in a timely fashion and immediately began an investigation. Several persons have been detained by the Djiboutian authorities for questioning. At the time of this cable, there is insufficient information to comment on the details of the incident to include identification of suspects, motivation, damage account, evidence, identity of the injured or terrorist ties. There were no Americans or expatriates injured as a result of the explosion nor is there any impact on American or Western interests within the region.

12. (C) Post comments: This is one of several incidents that have occurred in the past year that have targeted the Ethiopian/Djibouti railway. Although first glimpse would indicate that this is a terrorist motivated incident, Post believes that the underlying cause for these incidents is financially and politically motivated. Information revealed in discussions between key officers at Post and their Djiboutian counterparts has indicated that persons who have controlling interests in the railway or trucking industry are at odds and are taking steps to bolster their financial foot hold over their respective businesses. Post management has been asked to provide assistance in renovating and securing the railway by members of the Djiboutian government in the spirit of fighting the war on terrorism. Post has informally declined such requests and maintains that such efforts to prevent or counter terrorism will be done in diplomatic coordination with the Host Nation.

13. (C) Post will continue to work with Host Nation counterparts to enhance its counter terrorism capability, but does not believe that it is necessary to focus a great amount of resources on these incidents other than monitoring and the collection of information. However tragic they may be, Post does not believe that these incidents are terrorist in nature, but more so criminal acts aimed at eliminating the railway. Furthermore, due to the distance of the railway from US facilities, the lack of American or Western interest involved and the fact that virtually no Americans or Westerners ever board the train, Post believes that these incidents only pose a collateral risk to personnel and are of no greater threat than being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

14. (U) RSO Comments: It is worth noting that counter-terrorism initiatives such as the Diplomatic Security's Anti Terrorism Assistance Program (DS/ATA) continues to benefit the Host Nation as well as the US Mission to Djibouti. In discussions with Host Nation Police, the RSO received excellent input from the chief investigator on the case, who just happened to be a graduate of the DS/ATA Post Blast Investigation course. The chief investigator provided the RSO with detailed accounts of how the investigative team utilized the skills and resources provided by DS/ATA to conduct an appropriate investigation of the crime scene. The chief investigator expressed sincere gratitude for this enhanced capability and requested that DS/ATA training continue as much as possible. The Djiboutian police forces have already incorporated several techniques and tactics into their daily operations with positive results for Americans and Djiboutians alike.

15. (U) POC is RSO Marc Ramos at 253-35-39-95 or
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